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Our Little Secrets

David Horowitz Gets It All Wrong

Merely from the whines and howls of his numerous enemies on the right, you can tell that Sid Blumenthal has drawn blood in his book The Clinton Wars, many pages of which are spent detailing what his pal Hillary Clinton famously referred to as "a vast right-wing conspiracy". The only word we'd quarrel with here is "vast", since the prime players seem to have numbered under twenty. And of course these days Senator HRC rather strongly resembles a largish right-wing conspiracy herself. Blumenthal's is an awfully long book, but the chapters that I've thus far worked our way through do make a pretty good case in buttressing HRC's claim. Blumenthal's chapter on the Hitchens affair is vivid too on the latter's disgusting behavior.

Prime among the whiners and howlers is David Horowitz who lashes out at "Sid Vicious". I have to say that the endless claims on the right that Sid Blumenthal is some sort of heavy, or thug have always made me laugh. I don't know him that well, but Sid has always reminded me more of Bertie Wooster's descriptions of Gussie Fink-Nottle.

Horowitz says plaintively that Blumenthal has been beastly to him ever since Horowitz and Collier staged a "Second Thoughts" conference in Washington in the fall of 1987, designed as a sort of ideological hospice for renegades in the same stage of transition from left to right as themselves.

(**OLS** *continued on page 2*)

The Roadmap Fraud

By Alexander Cockburn

Don't waste your time fretting over the fortunes of the "roadmap" to peace in the Middle East. It's a fraud, following the contours of all the other frauds down the years, back to such museum pieces as the Rogers Plan, conceived in Nixon time.

The recipe is unvarying. The Palestinians are required to pledge that they will instantly abandon all vestige of resistance to Israel's onslaughts on their persons, children, houses, land, crops, water, trees, livestock, roads, schools, universities, graveyards, public buildings.

In return the government of Israel agrees that a few years down the road it will begin to ponder the outlines of a dim possibility of formal ratification as a Palestinian statelet of whatever tiny sliver of territory they haven't already appropriated.

Amid choruses of approbation for its courage from Israel's vast lobby of politicians and opinion makers in the US, Israel gouges a couple of extra billion out of Uncle Sam and gets on with the day to day business of making life hell for Palestinians.

The Israeli peace group Gush Shalom, led by Uri Avnery, tells the real story in a pamphlet titled "Behind the Diplomatic Moves: Intensified Assault on Peace Activists." It describes what Israel actually doing on the "peace" front: with raids, killings, and curfews throughout the occupied territories; a stepped-up offensive against all peace and human rights activists, whether Israeli, Palestinian, or international; continuing arrests and expulsions; the barring of humanitarian aid and development workers from reaching projects in Palestinian territories. Any time Israel wants to suspend whatever "peace" charade is in progress it acts with more than its habitual savagery, elicits a terror bomb or two and then says the Palestinians have not abandoned terror and can't be dealt with.

Are we seriously to believe that Ariel Sharon wants to surrender a square meter of land now inhabited by Jewish settlers? We're talking about a man whose entire life has been spent trying drive Palestinians out of what he sees as divinely ordained Greater Israel. The New York Times is now talking of Ariel Sharon's new-found "realism". But as a matter of fact Sharon has long spoken of accepting a so-called Palestinian "state" consisting of about 40 percent of the West Bank in tiny chunks including none of Jerusalem, and entirely surrounded by Israeli territory. There is nothing in the Israeli cabinet's highly qualified acceptance of the plan or in Sharon's personal "commitment" to the roadmap to indicate that his destructive view of Palestinian nationhood and the right to statehood has changed.

And let's not forget the Israeli demand that the Palestinians drop their insistence on recognition of a right of return. CounterPunch contributor Kathy Christison points out, "For the Palestinians, the right of return is a matter of principle as much as or more than it is a literal demand. The Palestinian leadership does not demand an unrestricted right for millions of refugees to return to Israel and has frequently spelled out a range of acceptable alternatives. But some acknowledgement by Israel that it played a role in the creation of the refugee problem is essential from the Palestinian standpoint.

"The Palestinian leadership recognizes Israel's demographic concerns and is pre-

(**Roadmap** *continued on page 6)*

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Our Little Secrets

Horowitz charges that it was Blumenthal who urged left wing bullyboys such as myself to attend and then to deride the proceedings in print. I can't speak for the others, but in my case Horowitz has it all wrong. I was visiting Washington DC and had better things to do with my time than go to the Second Thoughts affair but got dragged along by Hitchens.

When I entered the hall Horowitz was delivering the keynote to a sparse crowd of 200, and was visibly nonplussed at the sight of potential hecklers. He lost his train of thought, rambled inconsequentially, then plunged back into his childhood, recalling the upbringing of his sister and himself in a Communist family, where as so often happened the children observed and resented the long hours their parents spent away from them, doing "party work".

"My sister will never forgive them," Horowitz wailed to the audience of some 200, then depicted the abyss of his own deprivation. *He had never been allowed to go to Doris Day and Rock Hudson movies,* but rather was forced to sit through uplifting Soviet features.

If only he'd been allowed to watch Pillow Talk ...And of course, among the ironies is that Horowitz and Hitchens are now pillow-talkers themselves, tucked up in the same ideological four-poster.

Horowitz mentions what he calls Blumenthal's "vindictive" libel suit against Matt Drudge, who had published the charge that Blumenthal was a wife-beater and then failed entirely to sustain this damaging libel. Blumenthal sued. Horowitz continues, "I have myself once or twice used the threat of a suit to deter particularly scurrilous charges and to avoid the kind of damage that libel suits were made for. Alex Cockburn, for example, spent a lot of time at cocktail parties in the 1980s spreading the rumor that I was a CIA agent. In fact, I have never had contact with a CIA official or operative to my knowledge, or worked for any government agency or — with three exceptions — any outside employer for that matter."

Now, it's true that in May of 1989 Horowitz did send me a letter accusing me of making "false and malicious statements" but it had nothing to do with the CIA. I can imagine the Agency being capable of almost any infamy or folly, except that of hiring Horowitz as an agent. It's curious that Horowitz should have misrepresented, or misremembered why he was jumpy enough to threaten legal action.

If he looks in his files, or consults page 101 of his copy of my 1995 diary of the Reagan/Bush/early Clinton years, The Golden Age is In Us, he'll find he sent me the following epistle: "Dear Alexander Cockburn, It has come to my attention that you have been making false and malicious statements about my interviews with the late David Kennedy. I have consulted counsel about this matter and advise you to stop doing this. I am sending this letter to you to serve notice to you that if you intend to publish this, you and your publisher do so at your peril. Sincerely, David Horowitz, Los Angeles."

Nothing here, as you can see, about the CIA. So far as I can recall, Horowitz had formed the impression that I had repeated a story going the rounds at the time among friends of the Kennedy clan that this same clan entertained a particular loathing for Horowitz and Collier on the grounds that while researching their book on the Kennedys they had helped satiate David Kennedy's craving for drugs, in return for inside stories about the Kennedys. An obviously outrageous and baseless charge, as I'm sure all will agree.

Footnote: Though we don't normally run any newsletter material on our website I couldn't resist putting this item up and promptly got a note from Stew Albert:

"Horowitz once claimed in Salon Mag that I had called him a police agent back around the SLA situation. I never did and wrote to Salon to advise readers of his misrepresentation. David responded by saying my recollection was probably right. I guess he thinks of himself as an Agent and assumes other people have the same suspicion. But he is too big a klutz for the CIA." -- *By Alexander Cockburn*

Handicapping the Dems: Graham v Dean?

CounterPunch tipsters have been studying early form and are speculating that finalists in the race for the Democratic nomination will be Howard Dean of Vermont and Bob Graham of Florida. The scenario: Dean takes Iowa, and then wins New Hampshire, thus awarding the Muskie memorial coup-de-grace to Massachusetts' glass-jawed Kerry. Lieberman limps into the twilight, flush with money but with scant support. Gephardt slowly disappears like the Cheshire cat. Kucinich is grounded through lack of money. Sharpton stays in to the end. Graham, a tough campaigner, finishes off the unconvincing Edwards in South Carolina.

Senator Graham's hole card is his knowledge of the Intelligence Committee's unpublished report on 9/11, still classified thus far by the orders of the White House. For more on the former governor of Florida, here are some notes from CounterPuncher Jack McCarthy of Tallahassee:

"I haven't heard anything re: Graham's knowledge of Bush/9/11 but surely he thinks the congressional report speaks volumes and if declassified will tarnish Bush.

"It's like the Pike report, back in the 70s, an explosive document that is being held under lock and key for obvious reasons.

"Graham believes that if it was released the press would do the dirty work of asking the questions about the administration's protecting of Saudi collaborators and of course why the administration

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squired the bin laden family out of the U.S. a day or two after 9/11.

"Graham's rep is as a solid campaigner as far as nuts and bolts stuff go. Very gimmicky, e.g. his 'workadays' which of course the mainstream press loves. More importantly, he's a top-notch fundraiser, enjoys lots of support from corporate interests and knows how to cuddle up to the press.

"As a Governor he was your quintessential 'pragmatic technocrat' who championed (up to a point) social spending and education as it 'created a better business climate'. A sterile Keynesian.

"For liberal Democrats Graham's tenure was marred by his opportunistic and cowardly reinstatement of the death penalty in Florida.

"Perhaps Graham's most trying moments as Governor was at the 1980 convention when left Democrats such as Jimmy Lohman, a member of the Leon County Democratic Party and Leon County Dem chief Jon Ausman planted Lois Spenkelink mother of the recently executed John Spenkelink right in front of Graham as he was to deliver his prime time and much coveted nominating speech of Jimmy Carter.

"Graham was humiliated when uncle W. Cronkite noted "there appears to be a demonstration on the floor" and the cameras suddenly panned from Bob to Lois. The whole beautiful story is told in Washington Post writer David Von Drehle's book, 'Among the Lowest of the Dead.'

"I sense great ambivalence here about Graham's candidacy, not least because many Democrats who like him were against this contrived war and worry that Graham opposes the 'war on terror' because 'it doesn't go far enough.'"

KUCINICH WOWS MADISON (MIND YOU, IF HE DIDN'T HE'D BE IN BI-I-IG TROUBLE)

BY ANIS MEMON

Kucinich came to Madison May 31, to do some stumping, ostensibly as part of a Peace and Prosperity rally - and lest anyone forget what the rally was about, he and just about every other speaker repeated the two key words several thousand times, without actually explaining what prosperity is. I was mildly surprised that the theater in which the rally took place was packed - I think about 1500 people. Mostly middle-age and up, all white and presumably thoroughly middle class.

The speakers were: John Nichols, a Madison journalist who is now a member of the Nation (he was the MC); Mike Rice, who is the head of the meat-packers' union that is striking against Tyson foods in Jefferson, WI; Robert Miranda, a (large) activist from Milwaukee who is responsible for rounding up support in the black and latino quarters; Sue Holmes, the organizer; the president of UAW; Ed Garvey, progressive politician from Madison; and Kucinich, who was treated rather too much like Elvis, especially by the oily Nichols.

The best speakers were Rice and Garvey, perhaps because Rice is an old-time union guy and Garvey is an old-time progressive who's managed to lose every type of election in the state. Nichols really put me off: he seems to be a sound-thinking person, but on stage he pandered too much to the crowd: rather than say anything substantial about what the Democratic Party, or independents or greens should be doing, he worked the crowd, playing to the sense of cliquishness among liberals.

The wind-up for Kucinich was out of control: a standing ovation as he walked down a ramp from slightly off-stage. He is definitely a showman: no standing behind the lectern. He paced up and down the stage, mic in hand, gesturing every now and then and superbly modulating his voice, from quiet, almost whispered pensive remarks to roaring declamations. He often paused, appearing to falter, but every time he came out of the pause with what seemed to be a deeply-considered remark.

Ninety percent of what he said was off-the-wall touchy-feely, spiritual crap about peace (and prosperity), healing, (the international) community (this word should be banned for ten years), and vision. My mom said he sounded like a missionary.

Finally, he did pull out some serious talk: his four stated goals are: total nuclear disarmament; immediate cancellation of NAFTA and WTO; joining the World Court; total national health-care and pre-kindergarten day care subsidies. This will all be paid for by slashing the military budget, which he spent some time criticizing.

I haven't been to a political rally since Jackson came in 1988, so I don't know what things candidates promise when they campaign, and before they're in danger of being elected or nominated for something; but however improbable his goals are, he did at least seem categorical in his progressive stance. Perhaps he can, if necessary, back-track on all of his claims, but for now, he sounds pretty good.

Where he sounds less good is in his depiction of a fallen America - fallen, according to his history, only in the last two years. He's based his whole campaign on the idea that Bush and his associates have single-handedly hijacked the great, virtuous, freedom-loving democracy that was in place just moments before. After 9/11 they hoodwinked an innocent nation with promises of revenge and justice. The upshot of this is that he's battling a demonized Bush, rather than a system of governmental management that has nothing to do with individual leaders.

Perhaps he has to talk this way, because otherwise he'll have to admit that the Democrats are a bunch of spineless time-fillers and who need to go as well. But maybe he ought to confront that situation too and jump ship. He will also definitely have to tone down the guru vibe. It worked like a charm on a middle-aged, middle-class, liberal Madison public, but he'll get reamed in blue-collar places and the south. For the time being, and until Nader decides to run seriously, Kucinich is all right. (But keep a leash on Nichols.)

Where Kucinich sounds less good is in his depiction of a fallen America, fallen, according to his history, only in the last two years.

MERLE STAYS THE COURSE

And this just in from CounterPuncher Anne Boylon:

"I was at Merle's concert in Lancaster, PA on May 31. Just wanted to let you know that he sang a new anti-war song, made an appropriate anti-Bush statement ("Don't mind what George Bush is doing, keep your eyes on me."), and made a comment in support of the Dixie Chicks." Take that, Reba. CP

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Rat in the Grain

Dan Amstutz and the Looting of Iraq's Fields

BY JEFFREY ST. CLAIR

The war on Iraq couldn't have come at a more dire time for Iraq's be leaguered farmers. Spring is harvest time in the barley and wheat fields of the Tigris River valley and planting time in the vast vegetable plantations of southern Iraq.

The war is over, but the situation in the fields of Iraq continues to deteriorate rapidly. The banks, which provide credit and cash, have been looted, irrigation systems destroyed, road travel restricted, markets closed, warehouses and grain silos pillaged.

To harvest the grain before it rots in the fields Iraqi farmers need more than eight million gallons of diesel fuel to power Iraq's corroding armada of combines and harvesters. But most of the fuel depots were incinerated by US bombing strikes. There's no easy way to get fuel that remains to the farmers who need it most and no desire to do so by the US forces of occupation.

Even if the crops can be harvested, there's no clear way for the grain to get stored, marketed, sold and distributed to hungry Iraqi families. Under the Hussein regime, the crops were bought by the Baghdad government at a fixed price and then distributed through a rationing system. This system, inefficient as it was, is gone. But nothing has taken its place.

Iraqi farmers are still owed $75 million for this year's crop, with little sign that the money will ever arrive. There's speculation throughout the country that one intent of the current policy is to force many farmers off their farms and into the cities so that their lands can be taken over by favorites of Ahmed Chalabi and his US protectors. The post-Saddam Iraq will almost certainly witness a land redistribution program: more farmland going into fewer and fewer hands.

Grain farmers aren't alone. As in the first Gulf War, US bombing raids targeted cattle feed lots, poultry farms, fertilizer warehouses, pumping stations, irrigation systems and pesticide factories (the closest thing the US has come to finding Weapons of Mass Destruction in the country) the very infrastructure of Iraqi agriculture. It will take years to restore these operations.

Many fields in southern Iraq lie fallow, as vegetable farmers have been unable to secure seeds for this summer's crops of melons, tomatoes, onions, cucumbers and beans, all mainstays of the Iraqi diet.

"We expect failures," said Abdul Aziz Nejefi, a barley farmer from Mosul, in a dispatch from the Guardian. "We never had this situation before. There is no government."

Meanwhile, millions of Iraqis face starvation this summer. A UN staff report from late May paints a bleak portrait. It notes that Iraq's poultry industry has effectively been decimated. Millions of chickens perished during the war. Millions of others face starvation, since nearly all of the chicken feed stored in government warehouses has been looted. Chicken and eggs are staples of the Iraqi, amounting for more than half of the animal protein consumed by the population.

> ***"They are meat eaters," Amstutz told Iowa hogfarmers***

Many other farm animals, including sheep and goats, could be ravaged by disease, since the nation's stockpiles of veterinary medicines and vaccines have been almost totally destroyed or looted.

Some 60% of Iraq's 24 million people depend entirely on the food rationing system that was established after the Gulf War. Each week, these Iraqis could count on a "food basket" consisting of wheat flour, rice, vegetable oil, lentils beans, milk, sugar and salt. That system is now in shambles and is scorned by US policymakers. And promised grain imports have yet to materialize.

"Before there is unwarranted military technological triumphalism, let those setting out to manage the peace think mouths," says Tim Land, professor of food policy at City University in London. "Grumbling stomachs are bad politics as well as disastrous for the public health. There has to be a food democracy after decades of food totalitarianism."

Into this awful mess strides Daniel Amstutz, the Bush administration's choice to oversee the reconstruction of Iraq's agricultural system. An international trade lobbyist in DC with a fat roster of big ag clients, Amstutz once served as a top executive at Cargill, the food giant which controls much of the world trade in grain. During Amstutz's tenure at Cargill, the grain company went on a torrid expansion campaign. It is now the largest privately held corporation in the US and controls about 94 percent of the soybean market and more than 50 percent of the corn market in the Upper Midwest. It also has its hands on the export market controlling 40 percent of all US corn exports, a third of all soybean exports and at least 20 percent of wheat exports.

Al Krebs, who edits the Agribusiness Examiner, a vital publication on US farm policy, unearthed a 1982 questionnaire on food, politics and morality that vividly illustrates the Cargill philosophy. The Joseph Project, a public policy research group sponsored by the Senate of Catholic Priests of the Archdiocese of Minneapolis-St.Paul, asked Cargill executives to explain the company's attitude toward hunger and famine issues. The executives responded as follows:

"The assumption that there are moral priorities that are offended in serving world or domestic markets as economically and efficiently as possible rests on a confusion about economic facts. It is also a highly objectionable characterization of business's role. Before one makes moral judgments and advocates economic actions, one should understand the economic issues that are involved.

"The business of making moral judgments is both hazardous and potentially irresponsible unless one is fully satisfied that all the facts and causal relationships have been explored . . . We are not in a position — given time and other constraints —- to provide all the relevant background. Nor are we anxious to make moral judgments —- or moral defenses — of our own."

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"Putting Dan Amstutz in charge of agricultural reconstruction in Iraq is like putting Saddam Hussein in the chair of a human rights commission."

In 2000, the biggest food companies in the world, Cargill, Archer Daniels Midland, Cenex Harvest States Co-op, DuPont and Louis Dreyfus, got together to form Pradium Inc., a kind of secret, internal grain market that offered real-time, cash commodity exchanges for grains, oilseeds and agricultural by-products as well as global information services. It also offered ways to fix price grain prices on a global scale. Amstutz served as Pradium's chairman.

Amstutz is no stranger to government, either. During the first Bush administration he served as Undersecretary of Agriculture for International Affairs and Commodity programs. He was also the chief US negotiator on agricultural issues for the Uruguay Round of GATT talks, which led to the WTO.

"Daniel Amstutz, an ex-Cargill executive, is there to push the agribusiness agenda, not a democratic agenda," says George Naylor, president of the National Family Farm Coalition. "He will excel in telling the world that his policy is good for farmers, consumers and the environment when just the opposite is true."

The small farmers of the grain belt of the Midwest have a particular loathing for Amstutz. During his stint in the first Bush administration, Amstutz devised the notorious Freedom to Farm Bill, which eliminated tariffs and slashed federal farm price supports, all in an effort to lower grain prices for the benefit of Amstutz's cronies in the big agricultural conglomerates. As a result, thousands of American farmers lost their farms and monopolists like Cargill reaped the benefits.

The contours of Amstutz's plan for Iraq are familiar: a combination of free-market shock therapy and predation by multinational corporations. Gliding over a decade of UN sanctions that have starved the nation and a war that ravaged the nation's infrastructure, Amstutz announced that the real problem facing Iraqi agriculture is, naturally, government subsidies. "Iraqi farmers have had little incentive to increase production because of price controls that have kept food very inexpensive," Amstutz announced. "With a transition to a market economy, we can see health returning to agriculture and incentives to employ good farming practices and modern techniques."

The more likely scenario is that Amstutz will use the destitute condition of Iraq's farmlands as a lucrative opportunity to dump cheap grain from American companies like Cargill, all of it paid for by Iraqi oil. If this scenario plays out, it will spell disaster for Iraq's struggling farmers.

Prior to the 1991 Gulf War, Iraq imported more than one million metric ton per year of American wheat. Since then, however, no direct sales of American agricultural products have occurred. Amstutz is anxious to begin flooding Iraq with Cargill grain.

Moreover, Iraq owes the US Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corp. $2 billion on loans that facilitated pre-1991 ag sales and nearly $2 billion in interest on the loans. Amstutz will certainly demand that those loans be recouped through oil sales.

"Someone needs to warn the Iraqi people that other third world countries can already attest that the dependence Amstutz will create surely means that Iraq's sovereignty will be greatly compromised," says Naylor.

And Naylor argues that cash-strapped American farmers won't see any benefits, either. "Even if there will be more exports to Iraq, this will be a little drop in the bucket. Amstutz perpetuates the more exports lie because his agribusiness cronies are encouraging overproduction all over the world, thus being able to sell more genetically-modified seeds and chemicals and buying ever cheaper farm commodities."

Even as millions of Iraqi's face starvation under the boot hand of their food pro consul, Amstutz's appointment has excited little commentary in the US. His most virulent critic has been Kevin Wilkins, Oxfam's policy director in London. Watkins warns that Amstutz is little more than a carpetbagger seeking to advance the interests of the same food titans that his lobbying outfit in DC represents, Cargill, DuPont, Cenex and Archer Daniels Midland.

"This guy is uniquely well-placed to advance the commercial interests of American grain companies and bust open the Iraqi market, but singularly ill-equipped to lead a reconstruction effort in a war torn country," Watkins warns. "Putting Dan Amstutz in charge of agricultural reconstruction in Iraq is like putting Saddam Hussein in the chair of a human rights commission."

Amstutz was recently spotted in Iowa, pitching his agricultural reconstruction plan to Iowa feedlot owners. He told the farmers that they stood to profit handsomely from his plan to bring modern feedlots to Iraq, those foul-smelling operations that pack thousands of cattle and hogs into tightly confined pens. "They are meat eaters," he brayed. "Iraq is not a vegetarian society."

Iowa doesn't have many cattle or sheep operations. Most of the people in his audience raised hogs. And unless Amstutz has joined in a partnership with Franklin Graham to Christianize Iraq, there won't be a big market for pork products in the cradle of civilization. CP

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(Roadmap *continued from page 1*)

pared to accommodate Israel's fear of being swamped by large numbers of non-Jews.

But the problem must also be addressed in a way that does not simply ignore the refugees' needs. The refugees' situation is so fundamental to the roots of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and is such a festering issue for the Palestinians themselves, that any final peace agreement that did not accommodate their needs in some satisfactory way would be no final agreement at all but merely a new source of conflict."

And are we likewise to believe Israel's lobbying groups here in the US, primarily AIPAC, have suddenly had a change of heart and would now welcome a vigorous little Palestinian state? Of course they don't. If it can avoid it, AIPAC has no burning desire to go head to head with Bush on his road map, so it has turned down the volume on its rhetoric, while simultaneously urging its creatures in Congress to insist that the roadmap be set in the context of George Bush's June 24 speech of last year, now elevated to the dignity of a "statement of principles".

This same June 24 speech sounded at the time as though it was written by Sharon, and probably was. It hedged Palestinian aspirations with so many restrictions and caveats that it ended up as a binding guarantee by the US government (as if another one was needed) that at no time in the foreseeable future would the Palestinian national flag be permitted to fly over any real estate more substantial than a few football fields of rubble, denied water and surrounded by freeways restricted to Israeli settlers and the IDF.

In its finessing of the Roadmap, AIPAC got the members of both houses to sign a letter supporting the statements that Bush had made in the June 24 speech.

According to the AIPAC website, "President Bush laid out his clear vision for Middle East peace in an historic speech on June 24, 2002 that predicated U.S. recognition of a Palestinian state upon sweeping reforms within the Palestinian Authority and the election of new leaders not compromised by terror.

"Language codifying the president's policy was included in the FY03 Foreign Operations Appropriations bill, passed as part of the Omnibus Appropriations bill signed into law by the president in February.

"Two letters have been circulated in both houses of Congress urging the president, in the run-up to the release of the so-called road map, to "reaffirm his unshakeable commitment to his June 24 principles".

In the Senate, the darling of the liberals, Barbara Boxer who initiated the Senate letter co-sponsored the resolution with Rick Santorum, who, with Sen. Sam Brownback is pushing legislation to prohibit anti-Israel teaching in the nation's public school and universities.

An "aid package" to a putative Palestinian entity, put up by Lantos and a couple of other congressmen who should be getting their pay checks routed through Tel Aviv, is hedged with similar caveats and provisions. Mortimer Zuckerman, outgoing head of the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations has dispensed with the tactical finesse of AIPAC and has flatly denounced the Roadmap as an outrage to Israel, as have spokesmen for the Christian right. The more liberal American Jews in the Peace Now crowd have urged support for the Roadmap, but their clout is minimal.

The mystery is why, after all the years of abortive missions to the Middle East, (do you recall the Zinni Plan and the Tenet Plan to name only two of the more recent ones?) anyone pays serious attention to this nonsense, beyond cynical recognition that every couple of years the United States has to pretend an interest in a "just and lasting settlement" to throw a sop to world opinion or, since world opinion has mostly wised up to reality, to people like Tony Blair.

But the charade goes on. The Sunday talk shows and the editorial pages are freighted with earnest punditry about Sharon's historic shift. To find equivalent drivel one has to go back to the New York Times' respectful editorials of the mid-1930s about Hitler's constructive vision of the future of Europe.

Outside the United States the press is a bit more realistic. The Israeli daily Ha'aretz has premised its reporting and commentary on the assumption that Sharon and Israel are not serious about implementing the roadmap.

Hold the following truths to be self-evident. Members of the US Congress live in mortal terror of AIPAC and the larger pro-Israel lobby. These members know vividly the fate of those who defied the lobby and aroused its enmity, most recently Rep Cynthia McKinney of Georgia. The lobby would like to see Palestinians removed to Jordan, or some small space elsewhere.

For its part Israel knows that at its present rate of onslaught, it's only a matter of a few short years before it will have seized every useful acre of the occupied territories. It's all over and to pretend otherwise is to partake in a ritual long since purged of everything, save bad faith. CP

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